

The University of Tennessee University Center

University of Tennessee EDA University Center

University of Tennessee EDA University Center (UTUC) strives to address gaps in Tennessee's innovation ecosystem and promote economic development across the state. Supported by the EDA grant, state government funds, and university funds, the center's three focus areas include cultivating regional innovation capacity, helping companies innovate and expand, and advancing entrepreneurship and technology commercialization.

Activities

The Center supports business and industry by providing assistance in improving productivity and profitability, research and development, and business growth and transformation. For example, UTUC helps companies identify new markets and engages university faculty to design and implement process improvements.

The Center also supports entrepreneurship and technology transfer through training and technical support to access SBIR/STTR

funding; access to federal and university-based research; development assistance; and support to rural-urban entrepreneurial support systems. Currently, UTUC is providing outreach, networking activities, technical assistance, and technology deployment activities at its regional accelerator projects. In addition, the Center connects university faculty and research resources with technology-based companies to participate in



proposals for SBIR/STTR awards. The Center also holds training workshops for SBIR/STTR grant writing.

Finally, the Center supports regional capacity building through economic development strategic planning and implementation assistance, supporting

University

University of Tennessee

Center Director

Beth Phillips

Center Location

Outreach Unit

Center since 2006

Center Activities

- Training for community leaders
- Assistance in strategic planning
- Connecting people to university resources
- Grant writing support
- Commercialization services

Clients

- Economic development organizations
- Local and regional communities
- Entrepreneurs
- Existing businesses

Assessment

Techniques

- Feedback from staff
- Client interviews
- Feedback at regional workshops
- Client satisfaction surveys
- Case studies

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regional economic development efforts, providing economic development training, and providing economic research and analysis. For example, UTUC has led the development and deployment of a new economic development training certificate program for Tennessee. The Tennessee Certified Economic Developer (TCED) Program, administered by the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services, provides high quality training, continuing education and professional development

opportunities to Tennessee's economic and community development practitioners and community leaders. The TCED program is tailored to give

"The Center...has made significant strides with respect to strengthening Tennessee's ability to create, retain, expand and attract businesses through effective technical support to a combination of firms, community leaders and communities." --Center Stakeholder

participants a broad based knowledge of economic opportunities and trends, core components, and tools required to compete in today's global economy, with a focus on economic development in Tennessee.

Leveraging

The Center leverages over \$4 million dollars in federal grants (MEP, SBA, USDA, Regional Jobs Accelerator), which enables the Center to have greater capability to serve its clients than it would have with the EDA grant alone. In addition, the Center has access to a wide variety of information from the other programs supported by those grants. In addition, the Center leverages university data resources, faculty expertise, student labor, and the technology transfer office.

Success

Creating a Rural Entrepreneurial System in Tennessee (CREST) – Engaging communities in strategic planning that emphasizes entrepreneurship brings a new perspective on economic development to rural areas.

University of Tennessee EDA University Center (UTUC) partnered with UT Extension, and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development to assist targeted rural communities in strategic planning and implementation to help

communities “become more entrepreneur friendly.” Through programs facilitated by UTUC, the CREST program provided training to community members, local officials, economic development professionals, and local entrepreneurs in the economic importance of entrepreneurship, finding and interpreting data, asset mapping, strategic planning, creating community buy-in, and best practices in entrepreneurial development. The pilot program wrapped up in 2012 and was

successful in getting communities to establish effective working committees and make entrepreneurship resources available to their citizens.

By leveraging funds and agency relationships, UTUC helped create a more supportive atmosphere for entrepreneurship through education and the creation of relationships.